

UNTOLD

STORY LEADS FROM MONTANA



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Yurt Place or Mine

It is said that a man's home is his castle. But here in Montana your castle might actually be a yurt. Described as a "Mongolian tepee", this ancient sphere-shaped structure has been used by nomadic tribes in Siberia for centuries.

Since these unique dwellings have been designed to withstand intense winds and retain heat in the winter, they are a natural fit in Montana.

The cozy Potosi Alpine Yurt is nestled 8,480 feet high in the Tobacco Root Mountains, 50 miles west of Bozeman. Would-be "Montana Mongolians" access the yurt by cross-country skiing or snowshoeing in. Ted Wood has owned the business for five years. "I created the business because I always enjoyed skiing deep into the mountains to special hideaways and I wanted others to experience a secluded place that was not roughing it like winter camping."

The comfortably furnished hideaway is equipped with a propane cookstove,

"I wanted others to experience a secluded place that was not roughing it like winter camping."



Yurts at Yellowstone Expeditions in Yellowstone National Park.

lanterns, and a cozy barrel stove for heat. Guests can make the trek with a guided tour provided by Wood, or experienced backcountry skiers can rent the yurt on their own. Wood suggests that if someone is not comfortable with backcountry skiing they should try snowshoeing.

Feast your eyes on another Montana experience. Montana Backcountry Adventures in Big Sky serves up an out-of-the-ordinary gourmet meal in a backcountry yurt. Guests climb aboard a snowcoach to travel through Montana's glorious winter landscape to spend an

evening listening to music and dining on French onion soup, prime rib, and chocolate fondue with fresh fruit.

"Yurt" other option invites you to glide your way through Yellowstone National Park on a naturalist-guided cross-country ski excursion. Yellowstone Expeditions, based in West Yellowstone, operates two yurts that serve as their camp's social center, kitchen, and dining area.

Now isn't it time to find your Montana home away from home? For more information on any of Montana's yurt businesses log onto visitmt.com.

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Dashing Through the Snow

We all know the words to the favorite holiday classic song "Jingle Bells." But how many of us have truly experienced a one horse open sleigh? It's easy in Montana to bundle up, sit back, and laugh all the way in the comforts of a horse-drawn sleigh.

Horsepower Adventures, Inc. at Big Mountain Resort near Whitefish offers sleigh rides several evenings a week from November through the end of the ski season. Guests travel from the ski village to the livery stable where they are treated to a chuck wagon meal, storytelling, and a lesson on rope tricks. Skiers at Big Mountain needing a lift after a busy day on the slopes can also hitch a free ride on the sleigh between the lower and upper villages.

If you desire a ride over the meadow and through the woods, try the Rich Ranch near Seeley Lake during December. "It's really nice to go through the countryside in a quiet manner and just listen to the sleigh bells," says Belinda Rich. "Our customers especially love the view of the Woodworth Meadows on a dark, moonlit night." The Rich Ranch can accommodate singles and private groups. For reservations call (406) 677-2317.

Rainbow Carriage Service, just outside of Kalispell, hooks up their team of horses by request. They have three types of sleighs: the cutter is for one person,



Sleigh rides at Big Mountain Resort.

the ranchette sleigh holds five guests, and the bob sleigh can service 10 to 12 people. For reservations, call them at (406) 755-2317.

Give Montana a jingle this winter. For more information on all of Montana's sleigh ride businesses log onto www.wintermt.com.

Meet Some of Our Original Residents

Montana rightfully claims that the wildlife outnumber the people, with a greater variety in Big Sky Country than anywhere else in the lower 48 states. Antelope, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, eagles, trumpeter swans, and some of the more "celebrity" species like grizzly bears and wolves call Montana home. Montana participates in the national "Watchable Wildlife" program that helps educate people about native species. Sites offering particularly noteworthy wildlife viewing opportunities are marked throughout Montana with a brown and white "binocular" sign.

A real winter treat requiring nothing more than a good pair of binoculars, appropriate winter clothing, and some patience is a trip to Yellowstone National Park and the surrounding area. "The 'Northern Range' of the park has the highest concentration and greatest diversity of



Watchable wildlife in Big Sky Country.

large, romantic, and highly visible wildlife anywhere in North America in winter and spring," explains wildlife biologist Ken Sinay, owner of Yellowstone Safari Company. "The majority of Yellowstone grazing animals migrate to this area to avoid the more severe cold and snow of higher elevations. Visible predators such as wolf and coyote are commonly seen."

While the park is open year-round, only the north entrance at Gardiner and the northeast entrance at Cooke City is open to vehicles year-round. Several businesses provide snowmobile rentals or guided snowcoach tours into our nation's first national park.

To contact Yellowstone Safari Company log onto www.yellowstonesafari.com, or for a complete listing of businesses that provide services within Yellowstone Park go to www.nps.gov/yell.

The Last of the Wild Herd

The bison is the largest mammal native to North America and is the unmistakable icon of the American West. This mighty symbol once inhabited the Great Plains by the thousands. Native plains tribes hunted the bison for food, shelter, and tools. But with the arrival of the white man in the late 1800s, this powerful beast was nearly annihilated.

Foreseeing the imminent demise of the bison in 1886, William T. Hornaday, a noted zoologist, conservationist, and friend of President Theodore Roosevelt, collected 24 specimens from the last of the wild herds found in Montana. At this time in history, "conservation" meant preserving species to put on display for future generations. Six of the herd were prominently exhibited at Washington D.C.'s Smithsonian Institute for over 70 years. The largest bull in the group, weighing 2,200 pounds and standing almost six feet at the shoulder, was the model for several national symbols including postage stamps, the Great Seal of the Department of the Interior, and a \$10 bill that commemorated the centennial anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The Lewis and Clark Bicentennial anniversary will begin in January 2003 and run through 2006.

Over 100 years later this unique collection is now housed at the Museum of the Northern Great Plains in Fort Benton, Montana. Jack Lepley, Executive Director of the museum, was instrumental in bringing



Bison at the Museum of the Northern Great Plains.

the herd to Fort Benton. Lepley explains that the Smithsonian exhibit was dismantled and sent back to the University of Montana. After years of neglect the herd was found deteriorating in storage.

"We realized that these bison were a national treasure. It was the last of the wild plains herd and we wanted them to come to our museum," says Lepley. The town of Fort Benton asked the university's permission to restore the herd and display it in their community. "We had three years to raise the money and it only took us 30 days. I think the officials at the university were shocked that we did it."

The Museum of the Northern Great Plains is open from Mother's Day through the last week of September. Special viewing can be arranged. For more information log onto <http://www.fortbenton.com/museums/index.htm> or call (406) 622-5316.

Get a Lift This Winter

Travel Montana's winter website www.wintermt.com, is just the ticket you need to lift your spirits this winter. The newly redesigned site will guide you in the right direction to the most up-to-date information to plan a winter holiday to "Big Sky Country."

Find out more about Montana's 16 ski areas, which range from cozy day-use areas to famous destination resorts. Discover our millions of acres of public lands open to cross-country skiing. And head deep into our backcountry to explore the miles and miles of groomed and ungroomed snowmobile trails. If



that isn't enough the site will open your eyes to some cool activities for the entire family, such as ice skating, dog sledding, ice fishing, and winter festivals and events.

A Wild Idea for Conservation

One hundred years ago President Theodore Roosevelt set aside three acres on Pelican Island off Florida's coast as a refuge and breeding grounds for native



birds. This action launched the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest and most diverse network of lands dedicated to protect and manage wildlife. Roosevelt's forward thinking spurred a conservation legacy that now encompasses 93 million acres of wildlife habitat on 538 refuges nationwide; 15 are located in Montana.

One of these refuges, Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge near Malta, was established in 1936 to preserve nesting, resting, and feeding habitats for migratory birds in Montana. According to Kathy Erickson, Bowdoin's Refuge Operation Specialist, "the centennial gives us an opportunity to showcase the wildlife refuge system and to let people know that they are welcome to visit."

This past year Bowdoin NWR hosted centennial events that involved the community. Local school-age children participated in a wildlife art contest, and volunteers from each of the regional wildlife refuges competed in a quilt square contest. On the national level all of the refuge systems will celebrate the centennial on March 14, 2003. Each of the sites will create time capsules that will store artifacts and materials that represent the area's unique features.

"Hopefully a lot of people will participate in the activities," says Erickson. "With more people getting interested in public recreation, the centennial will help to remind them that the national wildlife refuges were established for wildlife and also for the enjoyment of people."

For more information on Montana's wildlife refuges call the state centennial coordinator, Sue McDonald, at the Lee Metcalf NWR at (406) 777-5552 or log onto <http://www.fws.gov>.

DECEMBER

- 1 **Christmas To Remember**—Laurel 248-8557 or 628-6114
- 1 **MonDak Ethnic Christmas Celebration**—Sidney 433-3500
- 1-1/2 **Victorian Christmas at Grant-Kohrs Ranch**—Deer Lodge 846-2070 ext 26
- 2 **Christmas Stroll & Parade of Lights**—White Sulphur Springs 547-3000
- 2 **Christmas Stroll Parade of Lights**—Malta 654-1776
- 5-8 **Festival of Trees**—Billings 252-9799
- 6 **Annual Christmas Parade of Lights**—Wolf Point 653-2012
- 6 **Artwalk Downtown—December Event**—Billings 256-6811
- 6 **Christmas Stroll**—Lewistown 538-5436
- 6 **Christmas Stroll**—Butte 497-6464
- 6 **Christmas Stroll**—Great Falls 453-6151
- 6 **Christmas Stroll**—Billings 259-5454
- 6 **Christmas Stroll**—Miles City 234-2890
- 6 **Philipsburg Yule Night on Broadway**—Philipsburg 859-3388
- 6 **Powell County Christmas Stroll**—Deer Lodge 846-2094 or 846-2684
- 6 **Powell County Museum and Arts Foundation Christmas Festival**—Deer Lodge 846-3111
- 6 **Whitefish Christmas Stroll**—Whitefish 862-3501
- 6-7 **Christmas Stroll**—Red Lodge 446-1718 or 446-1720
- 6-7 **Downtown Holiday Stroll**—Missoula 543-4238
- 6-7 **Festival of Trees**—Butte 782-0353
- 6-8 **Festival of Trees**—Helena 457-4800
- 6-15 **Winterbration 2002**—West Yellowstone 646-7701
- 7 **10th Annual Old-Fashioned Christmas Fair**—Livingston 222-4185
- 7 **Christmas Parade of Lights**—Harlowton 632-4694
- 7 **Christmas Stroll**—Bozeman 586-4008
- 7 **Christmas Stroll**—Stanford 566-2277
- 7 **Christmas Tree Lighting**—Superior 822-4891
- 7 **Cowboy Christmas Ball**—Big Sky 995-3000
- 7 **Holiday Stroll, Tree Lighting Ceremony & Christmas Parade**—Bigfork 837-5888
- 7 **Three Forks Christmas Stroll**—Three Forks 285-4511
- 7 **Townsend Christmas Stroll**—Townsend 266-3176
- 7 **West Shore Holidayfest**—Lakeside 844-3880
- 7-8 **Kick-Out-The-Kinks Benefit Ski Race**—Essex 888-5700
- 7-8 **West Yellowstone Dog Sled Rendezvous Races**—West Yellowstone 646-7110 or 646-7701

- 8 **Original Governor's Mansion Christmas Home Tour**—Helena 444-4710
- 13 **Festival of Lights**—Belgrade 388-1616
- 13-14 **Christmas Comes to Life and Festival of Trees**—Libby 293-4167
- 13-15 **Gun and Hunting Trophy Show**—Bozeman 586-6179
- 21-29 **Holiday Candlelight Tours of Lewis and Clark Caverns**—Three Forks 287-3541 or 287-3032
- 24 **Christmas Eve Torchlight Parade With Santa**—Whitefish 862-2900
- 24-25 **Christmas Eve Festivities**—Big Sky 995-5000
- 31 **First Night Missoula**—Missoula 549-4755
- 31 **Torchlight Parade**—Neihart 236-5522
- 31 **Torchlight Parade & Fireworks Display**—Marysville 449-3746
- 31-1/1 **Charlie Russell Chew-Choo New Year's Eve Train**—Lewistown 538-5436
- 31-1/1 **New Year's Eve Fireworks Display and Celebration**—Big Sky 995-5000

JANUARY

- 1 **Year 2003 Flathead Lake Polar Bear Plunge**—Bigfork 837-5018 or 837-6096
- 10-11 **Ag Days and Trade Show**—Sidney 433-1206
- 10-11 **Annual Ski Fest**—Essex 888-5700
- 10-12 **Montana PRCA Pro Rodeo Circuit Finals - 24th Annual**—Great Falls 727-8115
- 16-18 **MAGIE MT Agricultural and Industrial Expo**—Great Falls 761-7600
- 17-19 **Montana Cowboy Poetry Wintercamp**—Big Timber 932-4227
- 17-19 **Snow Boss Snocross Race**—Haugan 678-4242
- 17-26 **Seeley Lake Area Winterfest**—Seeley Lake 677-2880
- 23-25 **Ag Technology Show**—Billings 855-5765
- 24-26 **Northern Division Freestyle Competition**—Missoula 549-9777
- 25 **Montana Senior Olympic Winter Games/Nordic Event**—Bozeman 586-5543
- 25-26 **The Seeley-Lincoln 100/200 Dog Sled Race**—Seeley Lake 677-3016
- 31 **Micro Brew Review and Cool Dog Ball**—Helena 442-3263

FEBRUARY

- 1-2 **Snowboard Jam**—Missoula 549-9777
- 1-9 **Frost Fever/Winterfest**—Missoula 523-2754
- 1-3/31 **Winternational XVI Sports Festival**—Butte 723-3177
- 2-3/16 **24th Annual Southeastern Montana Juried Exhibit**—Miles City 232-0635 or 232-0637
- 3-9 **Montana Winter Fair**—Bozeman 585-1397

- 7 **Cowtown Beef Breeders Show, Craft Expo & Ag Trade Show**—Miles City 234-2890
- 7-8 **14th Annual \$1,000.00 Super Poker Ride**—Haugan 678-4242
- 7-8 **Chocolate Festival**—Anaconda 563-2422
- 7-8 **Glendive Agri-Trade Exposition**—Glendive 365-5601
- 7-9 **Whitefish Winter Carnival**—Whitefish 862-3501
- 7-13 **Race to the Sky Sled Dog Race**—Helena 442-4008
- 8 **Chocolate and Valentine Fair**—Helena 443-5291
- 8-9 **Lincoln Winter Fun Days**—Lincoln 362-4949 or 362-4892
- 13-15 **Montana Agri-Trade Exposition**—Billings 651-0440 or 651-2219
- 14 **Romance at the Moss Mansion**—Billings 256-5100
- 14-15 **28th Annual Northern Rodeo Association Finals**—Billings 252-1122
- 15 **Ice Fishing Tournament**—Glasgow 228-2222
- 15 **Moonlight Snowmobile Poker Run**—Lincoln 362-4335 or 362-4078
- 22 **Youth Ice Fishing Event**—Glasgow 228-9369 or 228-2222
- 22-23 **Snowbowl Cup Gelande Championship**—Missoula 549-9777
- 23 **100-Mile Snowmobile Poker Run**—White Sulphur Springs 547-2169
- 23-25 **Special Olympics Winter Games**—Whitefish 268-6859

For a complete list of events, see us at visitmt.com

FROM MONTANA

The diversity of events, places and people in Montana is almost as wide as the state itself. We hope to give you a taste of that diversity with this quarterly newsletter. In addition, my office offers these services to editors, writers and producers.

Visual Materials

Color slides, 8"x10" B/W photos and stock video footage are available for editorial use.

Writer/Photographer Referrals

We can put you in contact with many of Montana's most talented and experienced freelance writers and photographers.

Editorial Copy/Calendar of Events

We can provide background information or editorial copy for many subjects. We also maintain a calendar of events for the entire state.

Individual Attention

If you need the latest vacation guide and road map of Montana, a liaison with other government agencies or detailed information to fit a specific story angle, we're here to assist you.

Mary Boyle, Publicity Coordinator